

State and Local

Choose cost-efficient appliances'

Center gives tips on saving energy

University News Service

With hot, humid summer days just approaching, knowing how to read your utility bill and knowing how much energy various appliances use can help save money, say energy specialists at the Center for Energy and Mineral Resources at Texas A&M.

"You must know how you currently use energy in order to save energy," specialists say in the March issue of Texas Energy, a CEMR publication. "For example, when your electric bill rises during the late spring and summer, it is likely that greater use of your air conditioner is the cause. So your major conservation efforts should focus on using your air conditioning system efficiently and on keeping the cooled air in your home."

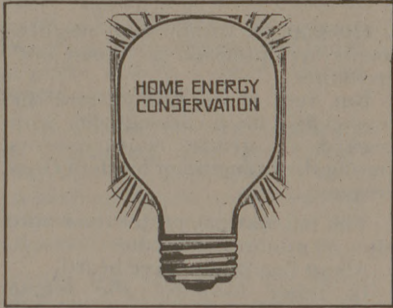
The next time you receive a utility bill, take time to make sure you understand the charges, the experts say.

"Compare the units of energy used to usage for the corresponding month of a previous year, which had similar weather patterns," they say. "By comparing the units of energy used, rather than the energy cost, you will have a true indication of how well you are conserving energy."

In a typical Texas home, about two-thirds of the energy used goes for space heating and cooling and for water heating. About one-third goes for lighting, small appliance operation, refrigeration, clothes washing and drying, cooking, dishwashing and television.

"So it makes good energy-saving sense to choose energy-efficient appliances and to make sure your home is adequately insulated and sealed," the experts say.

Information on heating, air conditioning and water heating, as well as insulation and air-leak reduction is available from the Texas Energy



Extension Service by writing CEMR at A&M.

Looking at average figures from utility companies and industry statistics, CEMR gives the following costs per use of various household appliances:

- Central, electric air conditioner — 37 cents per hour
- Room air conditioner — 11 cents per hour
- Ceiling fan — 11 cents per day

- Electric blanket, king — 7 cents per night
 - Swimming pool heater — \$1.42 per hour
 - Swimming pool circulating pump — 7 cents per hour
 - Waterbed heater with thermostat — 37 cents per day
 - Color TV — 2 cents per hour
 - Radio — 0.7 of a cent per hour
 - Clock — 15 cents per month
 - Night light (seven watt) — 37 cents per hour
 - General household lighting — 22 cents per day
 - Coffeemaker, electric perk — 2 cents per brew
 - Freezer, frostless — 37 cents per day
 - Microwave oven, 5 minutes — 0.7 of a cent per use
 - Hair dryer — 2 cents per use
- The energy specialists urge consumers to maintain a record of utility bills and energy use.



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Grant allows Project OASIS to go statewide

By SAM BUCHMEYER
Reporter

Project OASIS, a community service that originated at Texas A&M, has received a grant from the Hogg Foundation of Mental Health to spread the program statewide.

Project OASIS, which stands for Older Adults Sharing Important Skills, is one of the few organizations in the country that provides professional mental health care on a volunteer basis, said Royda Crose, program coordinator.

Crose, a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Psychology, said the program is in the first year of a two-year period, which is being funded by the foundation.

The project was organized in 1984 as a demonstration by the Department of Educational Psychology, the Gerontology Program of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program of Brazos County.

"Right now we have about 12 volunteers in local nursing homes," Crose said.

The volunteers, whose ages range from 55 to 82, are trained in basic skills and sent to local nursing homes to counsel patients with mental

health problems. At first the volunteers conduct meetings on an individual basis, she said. But some now are developing problem-solving groups and support networks.

Lynn McGuirt, associate commissioner for special health services in the Texas Department of Health, said, "I'm very impressed (with the Texas A&M program). With the big cuts we're facing and the shortage of funds, we're going to need more and more volunteers."

The duties of the volunteers are to generally improve the quality of life for the patients, Crose said. Volunteers are trained to address the mental health needs of patients since the main function of the nursing home is to provide physical care. They also address specific problems such as conflicts with roommates, staff and family, she said.

The real success of the program can be measured by the participation of the volunteers. Crose said some people feel that their lives become empty after retirement and that they have little worth. In Project OASIS, they can gain status as a volunteer and they are treated like a professional, she said.

"The volunteers have a role to play," she said.

The only real cost of the program is the salary of the professional mental health worker who supervises and trains the volunteers.

Crose said efforts are under way to raise money from local businesses and civic clubs to supplement the foundation grant. This money would be used to hire a coordinator to supervise locally and to help train volunteers.

Crose said they hope to have a staff intact by the end of the funding period so that when the program spreads, people will be available to give technical assistance and to aid in training.

Project OASIS conducts monthly training sessions, so volunteers would be able to begin training immediately, she said. After the initial training period, the volunteers are taken to local nursing homes where they are supervised in a working situation. Crose said there also are periodic intensive training sessions.

Dr. Michael Duffy, associate professor of educational psychology and program director, said, "We've had lots of success stories. People who were isolated and had given up on the world eventually came around and became part of the nursing home community."

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